AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1.   (currently amended) A system, ~~the system~~ comprising:

a first logic unit to provide a list of service providers via an Internet connection, indicating a real-time availability and a rate of each service provider of the service providers;

a second logic unit to receive <u>from a user</u> a selection of a service provider from the list of service providers;

a third logic unit to attempt to establish a real-time communications connection to the service provider; and

a fourth logic unit to search a database of alternate service providers for an alternate service provider based on a pre-established set of criteria and to offer the user an option of connecting with the alternate service provider<u>, wherein the set of criteria is to include a reliability factor</u>.

2.   (previously presented) The system of claim 1, wherein the fourth logic unit presents the alternate service provider if connection to the service provider fails.

3.   (previously presented) The system of claim 1, wherein the fourth logic unit presents the alternate service provider after communication is completed with the service provider.

4.   (original) The system of claim 1, wherein the service provider is an information provider.

5.   (previously presented) The system of claim 4, wherein information of the information provider is provided as a recorded transmission.

6.   (previously presented) The system of claim 4, wherein information of the information provider is provided as a communication with a live person.

7.   (previously presented) The system of claim 1, wherein the selection is received over a telephone connection.

8.   (previously presented) The system of claim 1, wherein the selection is received over the Internet connection.

9.   (currently amended) The system of claim 1, wherein the pre-established set of criteria includes the rate of the selected service provider.

10.   (currently amended) The system of claim 9, wherein a rate of the alternate service provider is determined to be a match if the rate of the alternate service provider is within a predetermined range of the rate of the selected service provider.

11.   (original) The system of claim 1, wherein the pre-established set of criteria includes subject matter.

12.   (original) The system of claim 1, wherein the pre-established set of criteria includes a combination of separate criteria.

13.   (previously presented) The system of claim 1, wherein a system administrator can establish the set of criteria.

14.   (original) The system of claim 1, wherein a user establishes the set of criteria.

15.   (canceled)

16.   (currently amended) The system of claim 15 1, wherein the reliability factor consists comprises of a ratio of successful connections between the service provider and previous users to total attempts between the service provider and previous users.

17.   (currently amended) A system for establishing a real-time communication connection between two parties, the system comprising:

a communications interface; and

a controller computer linked with the communications interface, the controller computer having:

a first logic unit to provide a list of service providers over an Internet connection, indicating a real-time availability and a rate of each service provider of the service providers,;

a second logic unit to receive from a user a selection of a service provider from the list of service providers;

a third logic unit to attempt to establish a real-time communications connection to the service provider; and

a fourth logic unit to search a database of alternate service providers for an alternate service provider based on a pre-established set of criteria and to offer the user an option of connecting with the alternate service provider, wherein the set of criteria is to include a reliability factor.

18.   (previously presented) The system of claim 17, wherein the third logic unit attempts to establish a real-time communications connection between the user and the alternate service provider.

19.   (previously presented) The system of claim 17, wherein the real-time communications connection is a telephone connection.

20.   (previously presented) The system of claim 17, wherein the real-time communications connection is the Internet connection.

21.   (original) The system of claim 17, wherein the first logic unit provides the list of providers to the user via a web page.

22.   (previously presented) The system of claim 17, wherein the second logic unit receives the user's selection via a web page.

23.   (previously presented) The system of claim 17, wherein the third logic unit provides a list of the alternate service providers to the user via a web page.

24.   (original) The system of claim 17, wherein the service provider is an information provider.

25.   (previously presented) The system of claim 24, wherein the information provider's information is provided as a recorded transmission.

26.   (previously presented) The system of claim 24, wherein the information provider's information is provided as a communication with a live person.

27.   (currently amended) The system of claim 17, wherein the fourth logic unit begins working only if the third logic unit fails to establish the <u>real-time communications</u> connection.

28.   (currently amended) The system of claim 17, wherein the pre-established set of criteria includes the rate of the <u>selected</u> service provider.

29.   (currently amended) The system of claim 28, wherein a rate of the alternate service provider is determined to be a match if ~~it is~~ <u>the rate of the alternate service provider is</u> within a predetermined range of the rate of the <u>selected</u> service provider.

30.   (original) The system of claim 17, wherein the pre-established set of criteria includes subject matter.

31.   (original) The system of claim 17, wherein the pre-established set of criteria includes a combination of separate criteria.

32.   (previously presented) The system of claim 17, wherein a system administrator can establish the set of criteria.

33.   (original) The system of claim 17, wherein a user establishes the set of criteria.

34.   (previously presented) The system of claim 17, wherein the fourth logic unit offers an option to connect the user to the alternate service provider after communication has ceased with the service provider.

35.   (canceled)

36.   (currently amended) The system of claim ~~35~~ 17, wherein the reliability factor ~~consists~~ comprises of a ratio of successful connections between the service provider and previous users to total attempts between the service provider and previous users.

37.   (currently amended) A method comprising:

sending a user a list of service providers via an Internet connection, indicating a real-time availability and a rate of each service provider on the list~~;~~;

receiving from the user a selection of a service provider on the list;

attempting to establish real-time communications between the user and the service provider; and

offering the user an option to connect to an alternate service provider pre-selected by the service provider.

38.   (canceled)

39.   (previously presented) The method of claim 37, further including searching a database of service providers for alternate service providers who match the service provider based on a pre-established set of criteria.

40.   (previously presented) The method of claim 37, wherein the communications established between the service provider and the user is a telephone connection.

41.   (previously presented) The method of claim 37, wherein the communications established between the service provider and the user is the Internet connection.

42.   (currently amended) The method of claim 39, wherein the database is searched ~~and information about an alternate service provider is sent~~ only if the user fails to connect to the service provider.

43.   (previously presented) The method of claim 37, wherein the option to connect to the alternate service provider is sent after the communications between the user and the service provider ends.

44.   (original) The method of claim 37, wherein the service provider is an information provider.

45.   (previously presented) The method of claim 44, wherein information of the information provider is provided as a recorded transmission.

46.   (previously presented) The method of claim 44, wherein information of the information provider is provided as a communication with a live person.

47.   (previously presented) The method of claim 37, wherein the rate is a criterion by which the alternate service provider is matched.

48.   (currently amended) The method of claim 47, wherein a rate of the alternate service provider is determined to be a match if ~~it is~~ the rate of the alternate service provider is within a predetermined range of the rate of the selected service provider.

49.   (previously presented) The method of claim 48, wherein the user can determine the range.

50.   (previously presented) The method of claim 48, wherein a system administrator can determine the range.

51.   (currently amended) The method of claim 37, wherein subject matter is a criterion by which the ~~an~~ alternate service provider is matched.

52.   (original) The method of claim 37, wherein a combination of criteria is used to determine a match.

53.   (previously presented) The method of claim 37, wherein a system administrator can establish the criteria by which a match is determined.

54.   (previously presented) The method of claim 37, wherein the user can establish the criteria by which a match is determined.

55.   (previously presented) The method of claim 37, wherein service providers that pass a reliability criterion are only considered.

56.   (currently amended) The method of claim 55, wherein reliability is determined based on a ratio of a number of calls answered by the ~~a~~ service provider to a number of calls placed to the service provider.

57. (currently amended) A method of rerouting a user from a selected service provider to an alternate service provider, the method comprising:

~~giving the selected service provider an option to~~ providing access to a database of alternate service providers when ~~the~~ a selected provider ~~can not~~ cannot be reached;

searching the database for an alternate service provider that matches the selected service provider based on a pre-established set of criteria wherein the criteria includes ~~a rate~~ a reliability factor; and

providing ~~the~~ a user with a list of alternate service providers via an Internet connection, ~~indicating~~ the list to indicate a real-time availability and a rate of each ~~alter note~~ alternate service provider on the list.~~÷~~

58. (currently amended) The method of claim 57, wherein the selected service provider is an information provider.

59. (previously presented) The method of claim 58, wherein information of the information provider is provided as a recorded transmission.

60. (previously presented) The method of claim 58, wherein information of the information provider is provided as a communication with a live person.

61. (previously presented) The method of claim 57, wherein the user can select an alternate service provider from the list and be connected to the alternate service provider.

62. (original) The method of claim 57, wherein the selected service provider receives a pre-established percentage of any commission paid to the alternate service provider.

63. (currently amended) The method of claim 57, wherein the selected service provider is given an option to provide access to the database when the selected service provider creates an initial listing.

64.   (previously presented) The method of claim 63, wherein the option defaults to allow access to the database.

65.   (previously presented) The method of claim 57, wherein the selected service provider is notified of a missed connection with the user.

66.   (original) The method of claim 65, wherein the notice comes in the form of e-mail.

67.   (previously presented) The method of claim 57, wherein the rate is a criterion by which an alternate service provider is matched.

68.   (previously presented) The method of claim 57, wherein a rate of the alternate service provider is determined to be a match if ~~it is~~ the rate of the alternate service provider is within a predetermined range of the rate of the selected service provider.

69.   (previously presented) The method of claim 57, wherein the user can determine the predetermined range.

70.   (currently amended) The method of claim 57, wherein a system administrator can determine the predetermined range. ~~of~~

71.   (previously presented) The method of claim 57, wherein subject matter is a criterion by which the alternate service provider is matched.

72.   (previously presented) The method of claim 57, wherein a system administrator can establish the criteria by which a match is determined.

73.   (previously presented) The method of claim 57, wherein the user can establish the criteria by which a match is determined.

74.   (original) The method of claim 57, wherein a combination of criteria is used to determine a match.

75.   (previously presented) The method of claim 57, wherein the alternate service providers that pass a reliability criterion are only considered.

76.   (original) The method of claim 75, wherein reliability is determined based on a ratio of the number of calls answered by a service provider to the number of calls placed to the service provider.

77.   (previously presented) A machine-readable storage medium tangibly embodying a sequence of instructions executable by the machine to perform a method comprising:

        sending a user a list of service providers via an Internet connection, indicating a real-time availability and rate of each service provided on the list;

        receiving from the user a selection of a service provider;

        attempting to establish real-time communications between the user and the selected service provider; and

        offering the user an option to connect to an alternate service provider pre-selected by the service provider.

78.   (canceled)

79.   (previously presented) The machine-readable storage medium of claim 77, further including searching a database of service providers for alternate service providers who match the service provider based on a pre-established set of criteria.

80.   (previously presented) The machine-readable storage medium of claim 77, wherein the communication established between the service provider and the user is a telephone connection.

81.   (previously presented) The machine-readable storage medium of claim 77, wherein the communication established between the service provider and the user is an Internet connection.

82.   (currently amended) The machine-readable storage medium of claim 79, wherein the database is searched ~~and information about an alternate service provider is sent~~ only if the user fails to connect to the service provider.

83.   (previously presented) The machine-readable storage medium of claim 77, wherein the option to connect to the alternate service provider is sent after the communications between the user and the service provider ends.

84.   (currently amended) The machine-readable storage medium of claim 77, wherein the selected service provider is an information provider.

85.   (previously presented) The machine-readable storage medium of claim 84, wherein the information of the information provider is provided as a recorded transmission.

86.   (previously presented) The machine-readable storage medium of claim 84, wherein the information of the information provider is provided as a communication with a live person.

87.   (previously presented) The machine-readable storage medium of claim 77, wherein the rate is a criterion by which the alternate service provider is matched.

88.   (currently amended) The machine-readable storage medium of claim 87, wherein a rate of the alternate service provider is determined to be a match if ~~it is~~ the rate of the alternate service provider is within a predetermined range of the rate of the selected service provider.

89.   (previously presented) The machine-readable storage medium of claim 88, wherein the user can determines the range.

90.   (previously presented) The machine-readable storage medium of claim 88, wherein a system administrator can determines the range.

91.   (previously presented) The machine-readable storage medium of claim 77, wherein subject matter is a criterion by which the alternate service provider is matched.

92.   (original) The machine-readable storage medium of claim 77, wherein a combination of criteria is used to determine a match.

93.   (previously presented) The machine-readable storage medium of claim 77, wherein a system administrator establish the criteria by which a match is determined.

94.   (previously presented) The machine-readable storage medium of claim 77, wherein the user can establish the criteria by which a match is determined.

95.   (previously presented) The machine-readable storage medium of claim 77, wherein service providers that pass a reliability criterion are only considered.

96.   (previously presented) The machine-readable storage medium of claim 95, wherein reliability is determined based on a ratio of a number of calls answered by the service provider to a number of calls placed to the service provider.

97.   (currently amended) A system for establishing a real-time communication connection between two parties, the system comprising:
        a communications interface; and
        a controller computer linked with the communications interface, the controller computer having:

a first logic unit to provide a list of service providers via an Internet connection, ~~indicating~~ the list to indicate a real-time availability and rate of each of the service providers;

a second logic unit to receive from a user a selection of a service provider from the list of service providers;

a third logic unit to attempt to establish a real-time communications connection to the service provider; and

a fourth logic unit to offer a list of alternate service providers based upon a reliability factor and to offer to reconnect the service provider to the user when the service provider signals availability.

98.   (canceled)

99.   (previously presented) The system of claim 97, wherein the user can specify a method by which the service provider is reconnected with the user.

100.   (previously presented) The system of claim 97, wherein the user can set a time limit on when to reconnect to the service provider.